

amount of attention they require on the part of teachers severely to distract from the educational atmosphere of a particular classroom. Personally, I believe that that is an appropriate consideration for our teachers and our principals and our school board members. I believe they have a right to weigh the quality of education of all of their students in making these judgments. I do recognize, however, that that aspect of this amendment is more controversial—not only more controversial, but more arguable than the balance is. And as a result of a series of meetings during the last two-week recess at schools all across the State of Washington, in which both the amendment I will introduce tomorrow on block grants and IDEA, aforementioned, more of our time was spent on this Disability Act and safety and security in the schools than on any other subject.

At the last of those meetings when both the disability community was represented and school authorities were represented, I detected for the first time some willingness to meet on a middle ground. Whether that middle ground has to do with safety and security only, how far the disability community is willing to go in that connection, whether or not there ought to be some consideration of the educational atmosphere of all students, none of these questions were settled by any stretch of the imagination in the course of the meetings that I had, even with the education community in the State of Washington. But I do feel that it is at least possible that on this very controversial issue a bit more time may permit us to find some common ground. From my perspective at least, that is the second reason that it was appropriate that I consented to the withdrawal of the Gregg amendment at this point in the debate.

I want to make it crystal clear, however, to educators all over the country who have supported us in this cause, that this withdrawal does not mean that the debate is over by any stretch of the imagination. The present Gregg-Gorton amendment, or something very similar to it, will be presented at an early opportunity on some other bill that relates directly or indirectly to education. It will not go away. But I hope the next time that it is presented, it is presented on a bill that is almost certain to be signed by the President of the United States rather than vetoed by the President of the United States.

In addition, I hope that by that point we may have at least a partial meeting of the minds—one might hope a full meeting of the minds—between those genuinely concerned with the educational rights and civil rights of the disabled community and those genuinely concerned with the safety and security of all of our students, and on the proposition that all of our students receive their education in an atmosphere best conducive to that education for all students in the public schools of the United States.

It is with those twin hopes—that we will have a better vehicle for this debate and that perhaps we can have the debate at a somewhat more extended fashion than the very limited time on the Coverdell bill and that we might bring the two sides together to a greater extent than they have ever been in the past—that I have agreed to the withdrawal of that amendment.

It is withdrawn from this bill. It will come up again. I believe that we need to do more to empower those men and women all across the United States who provide the educational services to our children day after day, week after week, year after year because of their own professional dedication. I believe their views need to be considered, and I think that we will be able to consider them better a little later on this year. I pledge, however, that consider them we will.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I want to take this opportunity to thank John Danforth, the former Senator from Missouri, for initiating the ultimately successful effort to create greater opportunity in public schools to have same-gender classes schools.

I was a freshman in 1994. I remember the compelling argument made by Senator Danforth about what an opportunity this would be for a girl like Cyndee Couch, the seventh grader at the Young Women's Leadership school in East Harlem, NY, to have a safe haven where she could learn without worrying about her safety, or her ability to speak out without being made fun of, or in any way not able to be secure in feeling that she could ask questions and participate in the classroom.

He also thought about the young girls in the classroom in Maine that were spoken about by Senator COLLINS today where the school had to go through hoop after hoop after hoop to be able to have an all-girl math class. When they were able to finally do it and break down all the bureaucratic barriers, the test scores have shown that this has been an outstanding success for the girls in that class, without any detriment whatsoever to the other students in that school.

What we want and what the Senate has done today is to help pave the way to ensure that every child in America to has this same option. This amendment is not a mandate. We are not saying that same-gender classes are best for everyone. But it has been proven that they are good for some, especially for girls and minority boys, who have demonstrated higher test scores and higher grades when they are allowed to concentrate on their studies, free from the distractions of a coed environment.

I am very proud that the Senate has spoken so clearly today in favor of this option for our public school students, an option that I might say is available at private schools, for parents who can afford it. Should this amendment ultimately become law, this same option will become available for many thousands of parents and their children who

may not be able to afford private school tuition. In short, the amendment expands the proven benefits of private, same-gender education to the public school system.

I am very pleased the Senate has spoken so decisively today on this issue, and I am confident Congress will include it in the final version of this important bill. And this success would not have been possible but for the hard work, vision, and leadership of Jack Danforth, who took-up this cause and in whose footsteps I proudly follow. When he left the Senate and said he would not seek reelection, I told him I would take up the mantle on this issue, and that I would continue his fight to ensure that our nation's schools pursue excellence wherever they may find it. The parents and students of this nation now await the completion of this job, and I urge my colleagues to continue to work for expanded educational opportunities and choices for all Americans.

Thank you, Mr. President.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, April 20, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,514,299,725,342.15 (Five trillion, five hundred fourteen billion, two hundred ninety-nine million, seven hundred twenty-five thousand, three hundred forty-two dollars and fifteen cents).

Five years ago, April 20, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,254,483,000,000 (Four trillion, two hundred fifty-four billion, four hundred eighty-three million).

Ten years ago, April 20, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,512,569,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred twelve billion, five hundred sixty-nine million).

Fifteen years ago, April 20, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,251,499,000,000 (One trillion, two hundred fifty-one billion, four hundred ninety-nine million).

Twenty-five years ago, April 20, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$454,840,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-four billion, eight hundred forty million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,059,459,725,342.15 (Five trillion, fifty-nine billion, four hundred fifty-nine million, seven hundred twenty-five thousand, three hundred forty-two dollars and fifteen cents) during the past 25 years.

#### MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to